THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (c) A proposal to convert the existing seven Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in the country into Free Trade Zones is under consideration. Details in this regard are being worked out.

Production of Tea

2958. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total production of tea during the last two years, State-wise and year wise vis-a-vis actual consumption;

(b) whether Government are aware that the on going dry spell may hit Assam tea as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 22nd March, 1999;

(c) if so, what remedial measures Government have taken in this regard;

(d) whether tea is imported; and

(e) if so, the details of tea imported during last one year and the country from where tea was imported?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) the State-wise production of tea during the last two years are as under:—

(Quantity in M.Kgs)

State	Production 1997	1998
Assam	425.43	462.78
West Bengal	169.95	195.71
Tamil Nadu	130.59	125.09
Kerala	69.64	70.62
Karnataka	5.41	5.67
Others	9.59	10.54
ALL INDIA	810.61	870.41

State-wise Consumption figures are not maintained. The Consumption of tea in the country during 1997 & 1998 is estimated at 633 Mn. Kgs & 645 Mn. Kgs respectively.

(b) and (c) The tea gardens in Assam experienced an unprecedented long dry spell during the first three months of 1999. While this has not effected the crop production in Assam during January and February 99, the production for March has reportedly been adversely affected. The Board has sent an advisory Circular to all the Tea Producer Associations highlighting the measures to be taken by them for minimising the impact of drought. The Producer Associations have been requested to bring this to the notice of all the member gardens.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. An estimated 7 Mn. Kgs of tea was imported during 97-98 from countries like Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Bangladesh, Nepal etc.

Export of Tea

2959. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the countires to which tea is being exported at present;

(b) the total amount worth tea exported to these countries during the last three years;

(c) the export order received from various countries for 1999-2000;

(d) whether the recent dry spell in Assam and other tea producing States will have any adverse effect on the production and export of tea; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by Government to deal with the situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Indian tea is exported to more than 80 countries of the world. Major importers of India tea are Russia and CIS countires, U.K., Germany, Poland, U.A.E., Iran, Arab Republic of Egypt, Japan, Saudi Arabia etc.